

Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), chair of the House Rules Committee, today spoke on the House floor to encourage members to support her legislation ending the overuse of antibiotics for livestock. Slaughter's also warned that American farmers risk losing access to overseas markets unless we can reassure other countries that our agriculture products are safe.

Below is a copy of her remarks, delivered on the House floor this morning during the debate on the Agriculture Appropriations conference report:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. McGovern, for yielding me the time. Mr. Speaker, before I start let me say that although I represent New York State I want to make sure everybody understands that agriculture is the largest business in New York state. Most of that obviously taking place in eastern and western New York and along the border--and we do know our cows.

A lot of debate on this bill is about food safety and the need to ensure that the products we consume are the safest they can be. I want to pause a minute to respond to some of the comments that were made in the Senate just this last week, which I take very strong exception to. As many of you know, or may not, but I would like you to know, I have introduced legislation that would phase out seven classes of antibiotics that are currently approved for non-therapeutic use in animal agriculture.

We had a hearing on the preservation of antibiotics for medical treatment last spring which for the first time the new administration acknowledged that the issue of overuse of antibiotics in farm animals is serious, and they are seeking a solution. The Rules committee held a hearing on this July 13 to gather testimony from the administration, the private sector, and the scientific community. Why is this bill necessary?

It is estimated 90,000 Americans die every year from infections that are increasingly resilient against the most powerful antibiotics in the world. Seventy percent of those infections are

associated with bacterial pathogens displaying resistance to at least one antibiotic drug. As much as 70% of all antibiotics, I can't stress this enough, 70% of all antibiotics and related drugs used in this country go to healthy food animals, not people, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Our legislation would in no way infringe upon the use of these drugs to treat a sick animal. It's simply bans the non-therapeutic use--constant daily use by farmers who mix the medicine which comes in 50-pound bags in food for livestock and hope that doing so will prevent the animal from getting sick. Now, think about that. If you mixed an antibiotic in your child's cereal, people would think you're crazy.

A superbug will stop feeling the effects of our best antibiotic. A senator claimed on the floor this week that Denmark, which has instituted the same kind of restriction that we call for in this bill on the overuse of antibiotics, has seen an increase of animal deaths.

The European Union made a decision to phase out antibiotics as growth promoters over a decade ago, and Denmark had a full voluntary ban which in 2000 became mandatory. After the ban was implemented in 1999, he said pork producers saw an immediate increase of mortality and diarrhea.

In fact, the truth is just the opposite. The National Institute of food in Denmark, has written us a production us -- has actually increased by 47% from 1992 to 2008. He also said that the mortality of livestock was largely unaffected by the ban. But I will assume that they cleaned up, that they didn't stack up the animals who lived in their feces and rarely step foot outside the confined pens.

But it has improved again more recently, and I'd like to ask unanimous consent to put a copy of that letter and report into the record today.

In fact, it's my guess that several of my colleagues would agree with me and disagree with my colleague in the senate. Finally, I want to touch on another issue relating to the legislation—the economy. This is a looming trade issue. Denmark and other European countries already use strict food safety regulations against American products, as we know.

We all know exactly what has happened to our industries with the domestic food poisoning, or health scare. Other countries respond by telling us they don't want to import our products and the losers are our farmers and industry. As this trend conditions, I see nothing but a downside to American farmers who may soon be told by more and more countries that their pork, poultry cannot be imported.

Before I close, I want to speak about an article that appeared on the front page of The New York Times this past Sunday. Stephanie Smith, 22 years old, who was paralyzed from eating a hamburger, a frozen hamburger bought in a market.

They traced the genesis of this hamburger-- and let me tell you what they found. Meat companies and grocers were barred from selling ground beef tainted by the strain of e. coli after an outbreak from Jack in the Box left four children dead.

Hamburger is the biggest culprit. This summer contamination led to the recall of beef from nearly 3,000 grocers in 39 states. Now, let's talk about the cuts of beef that are used in this hamburger. We found in the hamburger that paralyzed Ms. Smith that came from Uruguay. It had contact with feces that has E. Coli.

One of the most telling things is that there are unwritten agreements between some companies standing in the way of ingredient testing-- meaning big slaughterhouses will only sell to grinders who agree not to test this shipment for E. Coli.

According to officials at two grinding companies, one grinder's discovery of E. Coli will set off a recall of beef they sold to others. Food scientists have expressed an increasing concern about the various pathogens since only a few strains can make you sick, and we don't have requirements about washing up, etc. They animals are fed the antibiotic to kill E. Coli almost daily.

On August 16, the day Ms. Smith's hamburger was made, the number three grinder at the cargo plant in butler, Wisconsin, started up at 6:50 a.m. the largest was beef trimmings which they call 50/50 costing 60 cents a pound. Potential for this contamination is present every step of the

way, according to both the workers and the federal inspectors. The cattle had feces all over them. They are poor in health. Let me ask unanimous consent to put this in the record.

I hope people will read this. I think we're heading to a trade disaster and making 90,000 Americans sick every year. I yield back.